

The management monster

When employees flee, it's usually because of bad supervisors

By Marcel Schwantes

Gallup CEO Jim Clifton once said something vital that professors might not emphasize in business school.

“The single biggest decision you make in your job — bigger than all the rest — is who you name manager. When you name the wrong person manager, nothing fixes that bad decision. Not compensation, not benefits — nothing.”

Everything rises and falls on the strength of leaders. Gallup's research is a big neon sign for companies looking for problems and how those problems can be corrected. Yet Gallup's analytics suggest companies usually get it wrong when hiring managers. In fact, Gallup has found that companies fail to choose the candidate with the right talent for the job 82 percent of the time.

Bad managers cost businesses lots of money each year. When companies get these decisions wrong, nothing fixes it. Businesses that get it right, however, and hire managers based on talent will thrive and gain a significant competitive advantage, Gallup said in 2014.

How managers blow it with their employees

Drilling down, let's take a look at what the worst leaders do that send their people running for the doors.

1. Squashing the talents and strengths of team members

Not recognizing their unique strengths and talents beyond a job description, and how that translates to high performance, is certainly an engagement killer. People love to use their unique talents and gifts. The best leaders will leverage close relationships with employees by finding out what their strengths are, and bringing out the best in their employees.

When managers help employees develop through their strengths and natural talents, they are more than twice as likely to engage their team members.

2. Not communicating enough

The second common mistake that leads to turnover is lack of communication. Employees whose managers hold regular meetings with them are almost three times as likely to be engaged as employees whose managers do not hold regular meetings with them.

But mere transactions between managers and employees are not enough. See, employees value communication from their manager not just about the job or task at hand, but also about what happens in their lives outside of work.

3. Hoarding information

The third mistake managers make that lead to turnover — when this is done repeatedly and intentionally — is hoarding information.

The reason leaders hoard and withhold information is because of power and control. And control is one of the most effective ways to kill trust. The reverse of this is a leader who acts responsibly by sharing information and being transparent with his or her team.

4. Micromanaging

The fourth mistake that leads to turnover is a micromanaged environment. We all know what this looks like, so let's focus on how to avoid such a situation.

First, ask yourself: Am I putting the spotlight on my team members by focusing on their development? Do I truly value my people? Secondly, are you giving your staff consistent feedback, and equally important, are you listening to feedback that will further support staff needs and improve yourself (and your business, I might add) as a leader?

Lastly, are you letting them give input, express their creativity and allowing them to make decisions on their own?

5. Failure to listen

The fifth and last mistake that leads to turnover is when managers fail to listen. Sounds like a no-brainer right? I'm not talking about giving someone attention and nodding your head.

When a manager fails to listen to the collective voice of the team in pursuing a vision, chances are team members will not feel respected or valued.

When a manager doesn't solicit the opinions of others, especially during change because change is often scary, trust begins to erode and morale goes in the tank. So we're talking about a leader who has to stop getting the last word, a leader who allows for others to give input to important initiatives. And the only way to do that is to first listen receptively.

Bringing it home

Eliminating many of these things as a leader will open up all kinds of doors for you and keep your best people from leaving. It all starts with looking within yourself first, having good self-awareness to define your present reality and then figure out what leadership behaviors need to be learned and practiced.

This post is an abbreviated version of an on-demand webinar.